

The Eagle & The Crescent

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Transition to Self-Reliance

Jan. 27, 2006

Delegates view Fallujah first hand

Cpl. Heidi E. Lored

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- A bipartisan delegation from the House of Representatives visited here, Jan. 21-22 to get a first-hand view on the progress made in Iraq and to give Marines and Sailors a chance to voice their concerns.

Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, 18th Congressional District of Florida, led a four-person delegation which met with ground troops and foreign ministers in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan.

"It's an important opportunity to see firsthand what our fighting men and women are doing, the progress as well as the problems," said Ros-Lehtinen, a member of the House International Relations Committee.

The visiting delegates included two Pennsylvania Republicans, Reps. Todd Platts, 19th District, and Jim Gerlach, 6th District, as well as Massachusetts Democrat Rep. Stephen Lynch, 9th District.

Each congressional member received a situational brief from Maj. Gen. Stephen Johnson, commanding general, II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD), before meeting with Marines and Sailors from the states they represent.

During their two-day visit, the four representatives surveyed several sites aboard the camp, always making time to speak with troops. Twenty Marines and one Sailor dined with the delegation and took advantage of the opportunity to tell their respective congress member about their experiences in Iraq.

Corporal Joseph T. Mayo, orders chief and common access card chief, Group Personnel Administration Center, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Headquarters Group, II MEF (FWD), spoke with Platts about experiences with Iraqis and their general consensus about coalition forces in Iraq. Mayo, from Erie, Pa., who fulfilled duties at entry control points and the badge office where Marines were responsible for identifying, screening and talking to locals, told both Pennsylvania congressmen



Cpl. Heidi E. Lored

Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, 18th Congressional District of Florida, sneaks a peek inside an armored military vehicle during a congressional delegation visit aboard Camp Fallujah, Iraq, Jan. 21.

that he sees changes in Iraq. He said he sees Iraq becoming a great nation that is able to support itself sometime in the future.

"Most of the Iraqis I have come into contact with are grateful for the U.S. forces being here in Iraq," said Mayo, who's been in country for 10 months. "They have told me on numerous occasions how they have never known freedom the way they do now. One in specific was the local named Yass. He told me that this is the first time he can speak his mind without fearing death."



The issue of body and vehicle armor being debated on the battlefield as well as Capitol Hill was addressed as well. Motor Transport Marines from II MHG, II MEF (FWD), showed the delegation and accompanied media armored vehicles used during missions and protective and other essential gear used by Marines.

The representatives surveyed the East Fallujah Iraqi Camp

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FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
 Low: 46F High: 64F FOG	 Low: 46F High: 56F FOG	 Low: 42F High: 55F	 Low: 35F High: 52F
Sunrise 0704C Sunset 1731C ILLUM 6%	Sunrise 0703C Sunset 1732C ILLUM 2%	Sunrise 0703C Sunset 1733C ILLUM 0%	Sunrise 0702C Sunset 1734C ILLUM 1%

By Gunnery Sgt. Steven L. Saxton

Letters to the Editor:

*Dear Devil Dogs,

My son is a U.S. Marine deployed to Fallujah at the present time. I would love to receive your newsletter. Thank you so much for taking the time to let people know the good things that you guys are doing over there. You are in my prayers stay safe, Semper Fi.

*Our thoughts and prayers remain with you.

Brig. Gen. James M. Hesson, Army (Ret)

*Just a quick hello to remind you that I'm thinking of you and praying for you, as well as your friends in II MEF (FWD). God bless.

Mrs. Pietrylo

*Hello Marines,

We want you to know that you are not forgotten and that you remain in our thoughts and prayers.

SamSon Distribution

*Thank you for protecting our country. I think you are all very brave.

Cody

*Although I don't know you, I just wanted to write you and thank you for your willingness to serve our country. It is humbling to know you are putting your life on the line for me, and the rest of the people in this country.

Maria Rotz

Editor's Note: *If you have something you would like to share with the troops, or a comment about one of the articles please send your response to EagleandCrescent@cemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.*

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

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What's it like in your section?



Chap. (Lt. Cmdr.) L. M. Becknell
8th Communication Battalion

Kris Gray tells a story about an old wise man. Every day he would sit outside a gas station in his rocking chair and wait to greet motorists as they passed through his small town. One day, his granddaughter sat with him and slowly passed the time away.

A man stops and began looking around as if he were checking out the area for a place to live. He asks the old man, "What kind of town is this that we're in?"

The old gentleman replied, "Well what kind of town are you from?" The visiting man replied, "In the town I'm from everyone is very critical of each other. The neighbors all gossip about everyone, and it's a real negative place to live. I'm sure glad to be leaving. It is not a very cheerful place."

The old man looked at the stranger and said, "You know that's just how this town is."

An hour or so later a family passing through stopped for gas. The mother jumped out with two small children and asked where the restrooms were. The man in the chair pointed to a

small, bent-up sign barely hanging by one nail in the side of the door.

While the father was putting gas in the car, he asked the man "Is this town a pretty good place to live?" The man in the chair replied, "What about the town you are from? How is it?" The father looked at him and said, "Well, in the town I'm from everyone is very close and always willing to lend their neighbor a helping hand, there is always a hello and thank-you everywhere you go. I really hate to leave. I feel almost like we are leaving family." The older gentleman turned to the father and gave him a warm smile. "You know, that's a lot like this town." Then the family returned, they said goodbye and drove away.

After they were gone, the granddaughter looked up at her grandfather and asked, "Grandpa, how come when the first man came into our town you told him it was a terrible place to live and when the family came you said it was a wonderful place to live?"

The grandfather lovingly looked down at his little girl and said, "No matter where you move you take your own attitude with you and that's what makes it terrible or wonderful."

What is your attitude like? We always want others to change their attitudes. In reality the only power we have is in changing ours. Maybe the best thing for our section or unity is an "attitude check."

May the Lord bless you and your sections in the days ahead.

PROTESTANT WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday:

Protestant Worship 9 a.m. CLB-8 theater

Protestant Communion 9:15 a.m. Base Chapel

Contemporary Worship 10:30 a.m. Base Chapel

Gospel Service 1 p.m. Base Chapel

Latter Day Saints (Mormon) 8:30 a.m. Camp Workhorse

Latter Day Saints (Mormon) 6:30 p.m. Camp Workhorse

CATHOLIC MASS / CONFESSIONS

Catholic Confession Sun. 7:15 a.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Mass Sun. 8 a.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Mass Mon. 6 p.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Mass Tues. 6 p.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Mass Wed. 6 p.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Mass Thurs. 6 p.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Mass Fri. 6 p.m. Base Chapel

Every Marine plays vital role during convoys

Cpl. Cullen J. Tiernan
22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC)

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HIT, Iraq -- Rolling through treacherous terrain, convoys or combat logistics patrols of the Marine Expeditionary Unit Service Support Group 22 are constantly on the move delivering supplies and transporting Iraqi soldiers and U.S. Marines throughout Al Anbar province.

Aboard the convoys leaving Forward Operating Base Hit, every Marine and Sailor knows his role. Some are prepared to counter small arms fire from insurgents and all are vigilant of the improvised explosive device threat.

"On convoys, everyone has a job to do," said Capt. Troy M. Pugh, the Baltimore native and operations officer, MSSG-22, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable). "Nearly every day, we have multiple missions going to different locations. Although we have experienced several IEDs, the Marines have performed exceptionally well."

Pugh said the convoys are a lifeline for combat outposts near Hit and also for the Iraqi Army soldiers and U.S. Marines conducting Operation Wadi Aljundi (Koa Canyon) along the Euphrates River. The convoys provide fuel, food, bottled water; all the supplies that allow them to continue their counterinsurgency operations.

Pugh said the Marines on convoys know the importance of their jobs and there is never a shortage of volunteers. He said the security elements are "chomping at the bit" and always eager to get back out again.

"I ensure we maintain a 360 degree perimeter at all times," said Cpl. Edward K. McClure, convoy security team commander, MSSG-22, 22nd MEU (SOC), and a Winchester, Ky., native. "We are always ready to engage the enemy upon contact. We have to make sure all the goods on the convoy make it to their destinations safely. The Marines outside the wire can't push without us bringing them the supplies."

McClure said his mission in Iraq keeps him and other MSSG Marines busy and nothing slows them down; not IEDs, cold or darkness. He stressed that for a convoy to roll securely, each individual must know their responsibilities.

"We had an IED explode directly behind my security vehicle," said McClure. It was because of the unit's well-rehearsed procedures that they were able to continue their mission. "We reacted to the IED as we have been trained to, and no one was injured."

During the cold nights, according to McClure, the turret gunners have the worst spot. "We all bundle up and wear as much as we can so we can focus on the mission."

While keeping guard atop security vehicles, turret gunners, are ever vigilant regardless of the bitter, cold wind.

"We need everyone in the convoy to be alert constantly," said 2nd Lt. Lindsey Bellomy, originally from Dallas and the mobile combat service support detachment commander with MSSG-22.

"Whether they are part of the security posture, watching the roads, or collecting intelligence aboard a 7-ton truck, everyone's eyes and ears contribute to the overall safety of the convoy."

As an MCSSD commander, Bellomy maintains command and control, accountability, and security, so that upon enemy contact actions are carried out and the overall mission is accomplished.

"Our Marines have done a good job of making the point we only harm insurgents," said Bellomy. "We roll with Iraqi Army trucks, and we always have Iraqi children wave and smile as the convoys roll by. We have given out some humanitarian meals and will be giving some soccer balls in the near future. During a convoy, I had a little Iraqi girl come up to me smiling and waving. Even though we couldn't speak to each other, there was a kind of a communication there."



Cpl. Cullen J. Tiernan

Before the convoy departs, 2nd Lt. Lindsey Bellomy, commander, mobile combat service support detachment, Marine Expeditionary Unit Service Support Group 22, 22nd MEU (Special Operations Capable), briefs the convoy route to Marines and Sailors using a terrain model at Forward Operating Base Hit, Iraq, Jan. 22.

'Banshees' prepare to prowl home

Cpl. Micah Snead

2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD)

AL ASAD, Iraq -- The Banshees of Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 1, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD), are preparing to return home after six months of duty in support of Operation Iraq Freedom at Al Asad, Iraq.

The EA-6B Prowler squadron based at Marine Corp Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., recently completed its mission of electronic warfare in support of II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD), and was relieved by VMAQ-2. The Banshees logged more than 800 flight missions, or sorties, which added up to more than 3,000 flight hours.

"This was a very successful deployment for us," said Maj. John D. Thurman, electronic countermeasures officer, and Grand Prairie, Texas, native. "We got a lot of flight hours and it was gratifying because we know we made a contribution to the overall effort."

The Banshees deployed to Al Anbar province with high-tech weapons to battle insurgents. The EA-6B employs nonkinetic firepower to protect Marines and Soldiers on the ground. While much of the unit's mission is classified, the Prowler attacks by disrupt-

ing communications or disables the enemy's capabilities using specialized equipment instead of engaging enemy targets with bombs or rockets.

"It was an awe-inspiring experience," said Cpl. Anthony Potts, electronic countermeasures systems technician, and Santa Maria, Calif., native. "This is everything we wanted to do when we became Marines. We are putting our technical skills and physical abilities to use against an enemy and in support of our ground forces."

The Banshees, who supported OIF from Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudia Arabia, during 2003, were only the second Prowler squadron to operate from Al Asad. They also expanded their support to include detachments of carrier-based squadrons Navy Electronic Warfare Squadrons 135 and 141. Marines from VMAQ-1 not only arranged billeting, transportation and working spaces for the Sailors, they provided training, tools and maintenance assistance for the detachments.

"Due to our support, Navy and Marine Corps Prowlers were able to conduct more sorties, which is beneficial to our guys on the ground," Thurman said. "Our logistical and maintenance support for them enhanced the overall operational success and that is why it

was important."

The squadron supported 15 major operations in Iraq and watched from the skies as Iraqis made history on the ground with a referendum vote during October and parliamentary elections during December. The deployment was a first for many of the Banshees and most took advantage of the opportunities to excel, Thurman said.

"One of the real big positives from this deployment is the experience gained by young aircrew members," said Thurman. "Not only their flight hours, but working in a joint environment and being a part of the decision-making process. That kind of experience is not easily gained."

The deployment presented obstacles and opportunities to the aircraft maintainers as well. The Banshee maintainers racked up more 41,000 maintenance man hours and performed 20 engine installations during the deployment.

"I learned a lot and I think many other Marines did the same," said Cpl. Norberto A. Vela, seat mechanic, and Mission, Texas, native. "The pace was a lot faster, there were more flights and we had to replace engines more than we were used to in Cherry Point. I think the junior Marines responded to the environment and workload very well."

Potts said, overcoming obstacles was a theme for the Banshees throughout the deployment.

"Sometimes it's the little stuff, like being away from home or being tired, and sometimes you have bigger things to worry about like incoming fire or bad weather," Potts said. "But, what I think makes our squadron special is that we went above and beyond what was expected, day in and day out. From privates to the commanding officer, everybody worked hard. I think that is a testament to the strength of the squadron."

After a break with families at home, Thurman said the Banshees will return to their tasks and prepare for whatever missions comes their way next.

"We will be increasing our combat readiness for future contingencies," Thurman said. "Preparation is key in our role and you never know what mission might be ahead of us. We will enjoy some time off, reflect on the things we accomplished out here and move forward."



Cpl. Micah Snead

An EA-6B Prowler aircrew from the Banshees of Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 1, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD), prepares for the squadron's final flight mission, Jan. 21, at Al Asad, Iraq.

Security Marines keep watchful eye



Sergeant Michael J. Krzystofczyk, with the Personal Security Detachment, watches the commanding general from a distance at Al Asad, Iraq.

Lance Cpl. Joel Abshier
2nd Marine Logistics Group (FWD)

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq -- A Marine moves swiftly from the CH-46E helicopter's drop door as he continually scans the surrounding area for potential danger. His job is to protect the commanding general in his charge if a situation requiring immediate aid should arise.

This Marine is with the Personal Security Detachment, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (FWD), providing continual protection for the commanding general and staff day in and day out.

"My training has prepared me well on several occasions," said Sgt. Eddie T. Hedgepeth, a PSD Marine with 2nd MLG (FWD), who was formerly a shoulder-launched multipurpose assault weapon gunner with 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division.

Hedgepeth is one of few Marines with

the unit's PSD who volunteered to undergo rigorous training in order to protect Brig. Gen. John E. Wissler, 2nd MLG (FWD) commanding general.

Their protective security training taught them the art of being bodyguards through courses ranging from defensive driving, counter-surveillance techniques, identifying improvised explosive devices and extensive shooting courses.

"I couldn't have learned [the training] any better than with the guys I work with," said Sgt. Michael J. Krzystofczyk, another member of the PSD with 2nd MLG (FWD). "It is definitely hands-on training here. Going outside the wire and learning on-the-job training, as well as knowing how I can do things differently are just some of the things I have learned."

Working with the PSD also offers the Marines a chance to see how general offi-

cers operate, according to Krzystofczyk.

"I like being able to see what the general does at his level and the way he conducts his business," Krzystofczyk admits. "The best thing that I've seen the [commanding general] do was address the Iraqi Security Force soldiers. [What he said] would motivate anyone."

With more than 40 lbs of gear attached to Hedgepeth's flak jacket, including nearly 20 magazines full of assorted rounds to accompany his M-4 carbine assault rifle and M-9 mm Beretta, a canister of pepper spray, and a radio, he remains ready for anything.

"I am ready to react to any and every situation involving the [commanding general's] life," Hedgepeth said. "It feels good when someone puts their trust in you when getting them from point 'A' to 'B'."



Photos by Lance Cpl. Joel Abshier

Corporal Shawn T. Adcox, with Personal Security Detachment, and Marine Logistics Group (FWD), stands watch as Brig. Gen. John E. Wissler, commanding general, 2nd MLG (FWD), talks with Marines at Al Qaim, Iraq.

CAG continues making positive difference

Cpl. Heidi E. Lored

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

FALLUJAH, Iraq -- Marines assigned to the 6th Civil Affairs Group, 2nd Marine Division, prove there is another side of the story to tell as they continue to carry out their missions to provide guidance within Al Anbar province, the largest province in Iraq.

"The stories that we don't hear enough about -- the good news stories about making lives better and a nation stronger -- that's what the civil affairs Marines do every day in Iraq," said Col. Paul Brier, commanding officer, 6th CAG.

The group arrived in September to help rebuild the infrastructure and assist in facilitating the transition into a self-governing people.

"We're helping the people of Iraq, and I honestly believe it's come a long way from where we were," said Sgt. Richard F. Litto, team chief, Team 3, Detachment 4, 6th CAG.

"Schools have been built, roads are being repaired, water supplies are coming back into the neighborhoods, and people are actually smiling at us. That's pretty good."

Recently, members of Litto's team visited the site of one of their first projects, a school the team adopted in Fallujah.

"We followed it right through several different phases as far as assessing it, finding a contractor, obtaining funds and making payments," said Litto, a reserve Marine and native of Boston. "We went through the whole process from start to finish, and we became very friendly with administrators, teachers and students. It was pretty awesome to go from beginning to end."

The team returned to the school after the renovation process was complete to drop off supplies.

"It was like we went to school there as kids," said Litto. "When I look at these kids, I can see my kids. We can all see our children there. That's the innocence and it makes it all worth it."

During their visit, the team also visited families in need of medical care and handed medicinal supplies for treatment. Navy Lt. Troy J. Handojo, medical officer, Battalion Aid Station, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, interacted with local residents he came across who needed medical assistance.

"Although we are not always able to provide extensive medical care we can provide basic initial therapies," said Handojo, a Covina, Calif., native. "We've seen a number of cases. It's always satisfying to be able to help the Iraqi people, and they have expressed gratitude toward us. I think, however, bigger impact in improving health in this country will come when the infrastructure is strengthened. For example, having clean, potable water, reliable waste disposal, education, health and safety regulatory agencies, and of course health care will all have a greater role in ensuring public health."

Litto said there is a notable difference in the attitudes of residents who come in contact with the civil affairs team, and it's a gratifying experience for the Marines who visit the markets and see people shopping and walking down the street not having to look over their shoulder in fear.

"People are coming out," said Litto. "Maybe some people don't

express it as openly as they'd like to. I spoke to a man who said, 'America is good. Thank you for being here.' But he said it in a whisper."

Litto remembers an enlightening moment while on a mission in Fallujah. The team was visiting a neighborhood when he noticed a woman holding a baby in her hands at her gate. He contemplated whether or not he should walk over and give her supplies.

"You can't approach women," said Litto. "You have to stay in your lane and we're taught that with civil affairs training as far as cultural differences. I didn't make eye contact with this woman because I didn't want to offend her. I saw her child, and I walked over there with a big bag of toys and handed them to her three or four-year-old child. The husband came running over and I thought, 'Oh no, what did I do wrong?' He thanked me and shook my hand."

Litto politely asked the husband if he could take a picture with his family and the mother took her baby and placed him in Litto's arms.

"That was just an incredible situation to be in," said Litto. "It was something I'll never forget. That to me was them showing respect to me."

The civil affairs team continues to improve the local environment on a daily basis leaving their footprint in the road to democracy.

"There have been some tough times in Iraq, and yes things are getting progressively better," said Litto. "But if you show people that you care about their families and that you're willing to help their families it changes people. They can see the sincerity in it. Sure there are problems and there will be problems, but they're far and few between, which is a good thing."



Cpl. Heidi E. Lored

Navy Lt. Troy J. Handojo, medical officer, Battalion Aid Station, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, hands medicinal supplies to a resident of Fallujah, Iraq, during a recent civil affairs mission. Team 3, Detachment 4, 6th Civil Affairs Group, 2nd Marine Division, hands out supplies and provides medical care for residents in need.

'Wild Goose' hosts 4th MAW leaders in Iraq

Cpl. Micah Snead

2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD)

AL ASAD, Iraq -- Marines and Sailors from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 774 recently received a very personal message of appreciation.

Brigadier Gen. R. David Papak, the commanding general of 4th Marine Aircraft Wing, and Sgt. Maj. Jimmy D. Cummings, the 4th MAW sergeant major, visited the Wild Geese of HMM-774, here Jan. 18. The visit was much more than just a trip to inspect the front lines, Papak said.

"I came to see my Marines," Papak said. "I don't want these guys out here having all this fun by themselves."

The Wild Goose, a reserve CH-46E Sea Knight squadron based at Naval Air Station Norfolk, Va., is deployed to western Iraq for the second time in less than two years.

The squadron provides transportation support for personnel and equipment with missions ranging from resupply and detainee transfers to insertions and casualty evacuations.

During the visit, Papak attended a squadron formation, held a question and answer session with the squadron, participated in awarding combat aircrew wings, dined with Marines and flew a mission with the squadron's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Leo Kilgore. Kilgore, a Yukon, Okla., native, said flying a mission with senior leadership members is positive for everyone involved.

"What I find is that they really like getting out and flying with the aircrew and seeing the area," Kilgore said. "I got the opportunity to spend time with the CG and accomplish the mission. He was very excited to get to fly in Iraq and he really enjoyed the opportunity to see and do what we do over here."

Kilgore said connecting leadership with the daily tasks accomplished on a unit level can be beneficial for both sides.

"I think it is important for our senior leadership to participate in some of our tasks," Kilgore said. "It gives them an ap-

preciation for what is required to do our jobs. The crew and I had a great time picking his brain on several subjects during the flight."

Corporal Matthew Sender, an intelligence specialist and Marietta, Ga., native, briefed Papak on current intelligence information prior to his flight. Sender said Papak is the type of leader Marines enjoy being around because they can tell he cares about their welfare.

"I've been around him before and I really like him," Sender said. "We're the only reserve squadron out here, so he came all this way just to see us. That means a lot to people and really shows that he cares."

Master Gunnery Sgt. Cordie W. Glover Jr., Wild Goose maintenance chief and a Norfolk, Va., native, was onboard for Papak's flight. He said Papak delivered more

than just a morale boost to the squadron during his visit.

"It is always good for Marines to hear from senior leadership how much they are respected and revered," Glover said. "(Papak) understands and appreciates the job his Marines are doing and telling them personally means a lot to the Marines. These are hard times and the sacrifices made by all Marines and especially the reserves component are incomputable."

However, the visit wasn't just a pat on the back for the squadron's younger members.

Kilgore said everyone in the squadron took pride in hosting the Wing leaders.

"It means a lot," Kilgore said. "We are one of the last of the flying squadrons in Marine Forces Reserve to be activated and deployed in combat in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Making the trip to Iraq to see us means a great deal to the squadron and myself. Personally, I want to show off the squadron. I know that HMM-774 is a great group of warfighters and he has seen us in action."

Papak also used the opportunity to recognize members of the squadron who show their support stateside.

"He was especially thankful for the unconditional support the families and friends back home have shown us," Kilgore said. "He emphasized that the families have the toughest jobs right now and he made sure the Marines and Sailors knew that he appreciated everything that the entire HMM-774 family was doing."

Glover said the visit was a good reminder of the impact and role of reserve Marines, no matter where or when.

"The Marine Reserves have and continue to play a vital part in the Global War on Terrorism," Glover said. "The Marine Reserves are part of a team. No team is made up of one person or part. It takes everyone working together to win at anything. The Marines Reserves are proud to be part of a winning team, the United States Marine Corps."



Cpl. Micah Snead

Brigadier Gen. R. David Papak, commanding general, 4th Marine Aircraft Wing, prepares his flight equipment for a flight with the Wild Geese of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 774, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD).

Coalition forces hunt for insurgents, ordnance

Public Affairs Office

22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC)

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HIT, Iraq -- Eight days of back-breaking searches through villages and fields along the western Euphrates River valley have yielded thousands of pieces of ordnance as Iraqi Army soldiers and Marines continue Operation Wadi Aljundi (Koa Canyon) in Iraq's Al Anbar province.

Aimed at isolating insurgents and their weapons, the combined Iraqi and U.S. force began the latest sweep Jan. 15 and have uncovered a staggering amount of weaponry.

The soldiers and Marines are making their way inch-by-inch through caves, fields, wadis and islands in an attempt to disrupt the insurgents.

So far, the combined force has found and destroyed more than 4,300 artillery and mortar rounds, rockets, and mines; 590 pounds of explosive powder, 10,000 rounds of various types of ammunition (ranging from small-arms to tank main gun rounds), 300 blasting caps, approximately 100 feet of detonation cord and several working machine guns and mortar systems.



Cpl. Michael R. McMaugh

Marines with L Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), provides security for each other during a halt while patrolling a riverbed for any possible weapons caches Jan. 15.

"Every piece of ordnance that is uncovered is one less potential (improvised explosive device) that may be used against Iraqi civilians, Iraqi Security and coalition forces," said Col. Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., the commander of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable).

McKenzie also stated the future of the Iraqi Army is bright, based upon the individual courage of the Iraqi soldiers.

"The basic ingredient is courage and these Iraqi soldiers are showing it," said McKenzie.

Visit, from Page 1

on their final day of the visit and witnessed the progress of the Iraqi Security Forces. The delegation sat down with Iraqi Army basic combat training instructors and asked for their opinion on the ISF's progress and what could be done to improve the army.

Lynch thanked Johnson for raising the concerns of the men and women who serve beneath him. Several Marines present voiced their opinion concerning the Ameri-

can public and their support for the troops.

"Sometimes when you read the paper or hear news accounts the public doesn't understand or fully appreciate the support for your work and for your mission," said Lynch. "I think I can speak for the other members as well, we see it every day in our district in terms of 'support the troops' rallies or bumper stickers on every car. Sometimes it's hard to read that message because you're over here but we just want you to know the message, love, respect and the appreciation for the sacrifices that

you have made and the sacrifices that your families have made. It's so deeply appreciated in the United States Congress."

All differences aside, congressional members agreed on one thing.

"In regards to people like you who are willing to put on that uniform and fight for our country--that is a high honor," said Lynch to the Marines. "You put the rest of your lives aside and focused on this. You and your family are standing on the verge of the rest of the country. That's an unbelievable service."